

Oscar Biscet says religious freedom does not exist in Cuba :

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Havana, Cuba, Apr 4, 2012 / 04:09 pm ([CNA](#)).- Cuban doctor and former political prisoner Oscar Elias Biscet noted that while Pope Benedict's recent visit to the country was a success, religious freedom among the island's people remains stifled.

In an interview with Peruvian newspaper El Comercio, Biscet said the Pope's March 25-28 trip to Cuba was immensely beneficial "from a spiritual and religious point of view."

But he argued that the Communist regime in Cuba manipulates circumstances in their favor and will most likely "ensure this visit benefited them more than those who are suffering."

Biscet, who was imprisoned for more than a decade over his opposition to abortion, said that although government has shown a slight amount of "permissiveness" in recent years for Catholics who wish to practice their faith, "you still have to be careful about what you say in church."

Ultimately, "there is no religious freedom because it is forbidden to preach in public," he said.

Biscet recalled Blessed John Paul II's visit to the country in 1998, saying that the "government took advantage of it and did not follow through on its word to the Pope."

"During these fourteen years, the world has opened up to the Cuban government, but this government has not opened up to the world or to its people."

The Cuban doctor also criticized the Raul Castro government for misinforming the people by claiming there are similarities between Marxism and Christianity, when they are both "polar opposites."

Communism, he said, “is hatred for religion, for God and for God’s creation. The foundation of Communism is atheism.”

“They claim to be defending the poor and that is totally false,” Biscet continued. “One of the pillars of Communism is taking away the freedom of citizens.”

“If you take human rights and basic freedoms away from citizens, you transgress God, because God is freedom,” he said. “God is total justice, he is love in all its magnitude. Christianity and Communism have nothing in common.”

Biscet was arrested in 1999 for denouncing abortions in Cuba. The practice is legal there in cases of fetal deformation, rape or life of the mother, “but they violate this law and abortion is seen as a contraceptive,” he said.

“I conducted a study on one type of abortion that is performed after the 16th week and in 9 percent of the cases, the babies were born alive and they were killed. I recorded the testimonies of the mothers, I brought them to the government and Fidel Castro became furious.

One month later he ordered I be put in prison and even claimed I was mentally ill,” Biscet recalled. In 2011 he was finally freed due to the mediation of local Church leaders.

Biscet said that although political change in Cuba is very difficult, advancement for the country is still possible after decades of Communist rule.

“For 53 years fear has been instilled in the people and they have not expressed themselves, but when there is a double mindset: one real and one based on fear, it’s only one more step to freedom and to acquire one’s true personality, because when you know the truth, the truth will set you free. When you know the truth, you change,” Biscet said.